This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Previously Amended) A method of producing an ink-spread compensated variant of an existing optical code encodation scheme comprising the steps of:

determining a pattern of printed areas and spaces in the existing encodation scheme for a data input; the printed areas and spaces each having a respective length in at least one dimension as a function of a given unit length for encoding information; and

adding a predetermined length to the length of each space while the length of each printed area remains unchanged to produce a modified code symbol.

2.   (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the existing optical code encodation scheme is a binary code encodation scheme.

3.   (Original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the existing binary code encodation scheme is for an existing binary code symbology.

4.   (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the existing optical code encodation scheme is a bar code encodation scheme.

5.   (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the existing bar code encodation scheme is for an existing bar code symbology.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the bar code encodation scheme encodes a bar code having bars of varying lengths and spaces of varying lengths at least equal to a length of a narrowest space, and wherein the predetermined length is a function of the length of the narrowest space.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 6, wherein the bar code is an n,k bar code and wherein the predetermined length is a function of a module width of the resulting bar code symbol.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising adding auto-discrimination to the modified code symbol to enable a reader to determine that the modified code symbol is an ink-spread compensated variant for the decoding thereof and the amount of added length to each space.

9. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the predetermined length is x modules, $0 < x \leq 2$.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein the predetermined length is 0.5 modules.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein the predetermined length is 1 module.

12.   (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the n,k bar code is an 11,3 bar code having bars and spaces with respective lengths varying from 1 to 4 modules.

13.   (Original) The method according to claim 12, wherein the predetermined length is x modules, $0 < x \leq 2$.

14.   (Original) The method according to claim 13, wherein the predetermined length is 0.5 modules.

15.   (Original) The method according to claim 13, wherein the predetermined length is 1 module.

16.   (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the encodation scheme encodes a two-dimensional code symbology.

17.   (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 16, ~~wherein the~~ wherein the two-dimensional code symbology is an n,k bar code and wherein the added predetermined length is a function of a module length of the resulting bar code symbol.

18.   (Original) The method according to claim 17, wherein the bar code is PDF417.

19.   (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

dividing the encodation scheme into at least a first and a second set of data characters; and

the step of determining selecting the pattern from the second set, the different characters in the first and second sets providing an autodiscrimination feature to identify an ink-spread compensated code symbol.

20.   (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of adding at least one auto-discrimination feature to the modified code symbol to enable a reader to determine that the modified code symbol is an ink-spread compensated variant for the decoding thereof.

21.   (Original) The method according to claim 20, further comprising the step of adding a data character pattern to the modified code symbol to identify the modified code symbol as an ink-spread compensated variant.

22.   (Original) The method according to claim 20, wherein code symbols generated according to the existing optical code encodation scheme have an existing first start pattern and an existing first stop pattern, the step of adding auto-discrimination comprising at least one of

(a) using a second start pattern in place of the existing first start pattern in the modified code symbol, and

(b) using a second stop pattern in place of the existing stop pattern in the modified code symbol.

23.   (Original) The method according to claim 20, wherein code symbols generated according to the existing optical code encodation scheme have a first finder pattern and wherein the step of adding auto-discrimination comprises providing a second finder pattern in the modified code symbol in place of the first finder pattern.

24.   (Original) In a method for decoding an ink-spread compensated variant of an existing n, k bar encodation scheme produced in accordance with claim 23, the improvement comprising the steps of:

discriminating that the bar code symbol is an ink-spread compensated variant and determining the amount of the added length;

normalizing the width of a character to add the total added length; and

varying the threshold for the spaces to compensate for the length added thereto.

Claims 25-38. (Canceled)